

*July 7 / Administration of George W. Bush, 2001*

but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

## Remarks to America's Promise Participants *July 9, 2001*

Thank you all very much, Marc. There is no more important goal for America than to make sure every person realizes the promise of our great land, and I want to thank the good folks of America's Promise for working tirelessly to make sure that goal reaches throughout all our country. My administration stands side by side with you.

And here in Washington, we can help. It's important for the Congress to pass the education reform package to make sure no child gets left behind. It's important for Congress to pass a good and meaningful Patients' Bill of Rights to make sure all in America have got good access to health care. And it's important for America for Congress to pass my Faith-Based Initiative so that Government can stand side by side with the soldiers in the armies of compassion to make sure America's promise is rich and real for every citizen.

I'm honored that the first chairman of America's Promise agreed to be our Nation's Secretary of State. He's doing a fantastic job for our country. Welcome, Mr. Secretary. Like me, he married well. *[Laughter]* Thank you for being here, Alma.

I want to thank my friend Marc Racicot for being the chairman of the board. I want to thank Peter Gallagher. I welcome my friend the Governor of Maine, Angus King, for being here. I want to thank Ted Stevens and Connie Morella as well for being here—Members of the United States Congress. I want to thank the first lady of Michigan, Michelle Engler, for joining us as well. It is my honor to welcome to the Rose Garden Jackie Joyner-Kersey, as well as Bob. Thank you all, and thank you for

being such a great supporter for America's Promise.

I also want to thank the members of the board of directors, as well as the members of the Youth Leadership Team, 15 of our best in America who are here today. Please stand. *[Applause]* Just as I was receiving the organization's annual report, I also had an opportunity to say hello to the 15. And our country is in great hands when you look in the eyes of these 15 fantastic leaders. The record has been impressive, and the commitment has been deep. And I want to thank you, Marc, for continuing to challenge corporate America and individuals with the simple and urgent message: There's a need in every community, and a responsible society meets those needs.

Today we're joined by several men and women from around the country who represent the promise of America's Promise:

Mary Mahoney, the president and chief executive officer of Howard Johnson's. Where's Mary? Hi, Mary. Thank you for coming. She's been a mentor, and she's inspired employees at more than 500 hotels to serve as mentors. I want to thank you very much for your dedication.

Leon Assael, the dean of College of Dentistry at the University of Kentucky, is here. Mr. Dean, where are you? Thank you for coming, Dean. They staffed a mobile dental van and asked volunteer faculty and students to serve more than 12,500 disadvantaged students in Appalachia. Thank you for your service to the country.

Reverend Clifford Barnett of Virginia's Brighton Rock AME Church. Thank you for coming, Reverend. He set up a safe haven for children to come to, a place of

worship, not only to find hot meals but to learn how to serve one another.

Charlie Trotter of Trotter's Restaurant of Chicago. Hello, Charlie. The man not only serves good food, but every Groundhog Day he opens his kitchen to teach area youth and has sponsored some of his neighborhood youth through scholarship programs.

I want to thank you all for coming. This is an example of the greatness of our country, where people ask the question, "What can I do to help," and then not wait for some Government activity to take place but do it anyway in spite of Government. I want to thank you all for serving as fantastic examples, just like I want to thank Aisha Shaheen. Where is she? Aisha—there she is. Thank you so much for coming. She understands that service is a part of a successful life. Catch this: She teaches honors and advanced placement English, biology, and calculus to inner-city youngsters in the south central neighborhood of Los Angeles.

We know what children need to succeed. They need mentors and role models like Aisha. They need to be healthy and educated and challenged to serve and challenged to love a neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves. And that's what America's Promise does.

In many neighborhoods, what a child needs is a caring adult. Yesterday, flying down from Maine, Angus King, the Governor of that State, told me about a program that he's starting to implement, where this summer they're going to recruit 30,000 mentors in the State of Maine, all aimed to surround the children of Maine with love, all aimed at understanding there's nothing more powerful than an individual that says to a child in need, "Somebody cares for you. Somebody loves you." So Angus, I want to thank you for setting the example.

My dream for America is for there to be mentors all over the country, in every neighborhood, in every community, where adults are able to say to a child, "The

America promise belongs to you, just as much as it does to anybody else."

The effort requires a broad-scaled strategy. That's why I was pleased to see that America's Promise has drawn 500 national partners and more than 550 State and local partners. And the effort really has just begun.

So I want to thank America's Promise. I want to thank you for your love and compassion. And I want to thank the thousands all across our land who are working hard to make America a fabulous country for all.

Now, there are some things that Congress can do as well. First, this Congress needs to get a education reform bill on my desk before the summer recess. We had a bill pass out of the House by a broad margin, a bill pass out of the Senate by a broad margin. There is no need for further delay. It is time to get a good reform bill.

This is a bill that says every child matters. We believe in setting high expectations for all children in America. We believe every child can learn. But we also understand that educational excellence is found at local levels. We pass unprecedented amount of power out of Washington to local jurisdictions, and in return for Federal dollars, which we increase, we expect results. We expect there to be a measurement so we can herald success and address failure before it's too late.

Secondly, the Congress must act on a Patients' Bill of Rights, a good Patients' Bill of Rights, one that recognizes patients are important, not lawyers, a Patients' Bill of Rights that encourages quality health care without encouraging frivolous and junk lawsuits that will threaten the very existence of an important health care policy in America. And so I urge—I urge Congress to bring a reasonable bill to my desk. We've made great progress. There's broad agreement.

For example, a heart patient should be able to see a cardiologist he needs without

going through a gatekeeper, or a woman should be able to see her gynecologist without asking permission, or a parent should always be able to choose their child's pediatrician. And anyone denied health care by an HMO ought to have the right to an immediate appeal, with the outcome determined by doctors, not HMO bureaucrats or trial lawyers.

We've got the makings for a good bill, and Congress ought to act and bring me a bill so I can sign it before the August recess.

And finally, there is no more important initiative than the faith-based program that I've submitted to the United States Congress. It's important because Government can't make people love one another. But what Government can do is stand side by side with those who do love and those who are compassionate. I can't think of anything more important for our Government, to recognize the power of community and faith-based groups in our society. If the goal is to make sure no one is left behind, let us stand side by side with the soldiers in the armies of compassion who have taken on that call themselves.

So I urge Congress to not get stuck in the process but to think about the results and to pass meaningful legislation that will allow and encourage and foster faith-based groups all across America to help people in need. I absolutely know that the great strength of the country lies in the hearts and souls of our citizens, and Congress must recognize that by enabling such faith-based programs to flourish all across the country.

So there are things we can do here in Washington to help. But there's nothing more important than our citizens. And

America's Promise does a fabulous job of cultivating and gathering and nurturing the compassion of America. It's an honor to be the President of a country with so many loving people.

I understand that societies change one heart, one soul at a time, that here in Washington we tend to think all we've got to do is pass a law and everything will be fine. But that's not how it works. Cultures and hope change as a result of our compassion in America seizing the moment. And that's what America's Promise is about.

So Marc, thank you very much for bringing the report. I'm honored to receive it. I encourage people all across our country to find a way to help, to become involved with making sure America's Promise is, in fact—reaches its hope all throughout our society. For those of you who are looking for a way to help our country, call America's Promise; say you want to help. And I can assure you, we'll sign you up.

It's now my honor to sign a resolution, like other Presidents have done.

God bless you all, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:25 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Gov. Marc Racicot of Montana, chairman of the board, Peter A. Gallagher, president and chief executive officer, Michelle Engler, board member, and Jackie Joyner-Kersey, spokesperson, America's Promise; Alma Powell, wife of Secretary of State Colin L. Powell; and Ms. Joyner-Kersey's husband, Bobby Kersey. Following his remarks, the President signed a declaration entitled "Fulfilling the Promise of America."